

Mr. Stephen Rosenfeld, deputy editorial director  
The Washington Post  
1150 15 St., NW  
Washington, DC 20071

8/26/93

Dear Mr. Rosenfeld,

The thrust of my work, as you may have had no reason to know, is that in <sup>the</sup> time of great crisis when JFK was assassinated and ever since then the basic institutions of our society failed and continued to fail. In my coming book I am quite specific on this and make extensive use of a fine statement of journalistic responsibility in a Post editorial. This may help you understand my concern over what was really a fun-<sup>and</sup> games treatment of the recent disclosures.

I regard the media as one of our vital and basic institutions. It failed. I think it failed all over again with the recent media event staged by the government.

With the usual, regrettable and unavoidable rush I've written what I offer as an oped piece on it. ~~But~~ even for me my typing was terrible. My wife who at 81 is no longer the perfect typist she once was (among many other fine and useful things) will, I hope, be able to make it a bit cleaner tomorrow, when if she does I'll mail it.

I do wish that, whether or not you see fit to use it, you (pl.) would give it some thought.

I fear this is about to happen all over again with regard to the assassination for other reasons that tend to inhibit what can be done when the media is confronted with a wretchedly bad and knowing dishonest book like Posner's Case Closed.

But unless the media is determined not to be used, which really means misused, it certainly will be by those who have the motive, means and ability to do it.

Sincerely,



Harold Weisberg

Harold Weisberg

As it has for almost 30 years, the government treated its August 23 disclosure of JFK assassination information as a media event.

As it has for all those years, the unquestioning, uncomplaining media played the government's game.

Nobody asked how it could be possible for the media or any others to make any sense or report any legitimate news overnight when confronted with 800,000 pages all at one time.

Nobody asked why, if all those pages can now be disclosed, they could not have been disclosed beginning 30 years ago and on innumerable occasions since then - particularly when they were within FOIA requests and lawsuits for their disclosure, including by me, for almost 20 years and were steadfastly denied, with my requests and lawsuits, in open violation of the law, ignored.

That law says the people have a right to know what their government does.

Their government has and by this shabby and inappropriate trickery continues to tell the people, "The hell you do!"

From having obtained a little more than a third of the volume of records the Post states are now being disclosed, I know that, without any question at all, the sheer volume prevents any meaningful access.

What individual can pay for that great volume of paper and then find the uncompensated time to go over all of it and in so doing comprehend all that is in it?

The cost? About \$200,000 for the paper, perhaps another \$25,000 for file cabinets alone? Scholars or writers can afford this? Students?

What media component can afford to devote the time and ~~cost~~ of making a meaningful effort to buy, review and then report on them to the people? And if by chance any one did, would not get discouraged on learning that most of it is trash that has nothing at all to do with the crime?

The people, whose knowledge of major matters is indispensable to the proper functioning of representative society, get ~~nothing~~<sup>nothing</sup> of value and are still again deceived and misled.

When the Warren Commission began with the identical trickery, it was one of the greatest causes of disenchantment with government in all our history. From my considerable mail, that disenchantment passes to new generations. I hear it from many young people who begin by telling me they had not been born when President Kennedy was assassinated and from many more who say they were too young to really understand it but nonetheless felt it and continue to feel it with pain and disillusionment.

The Warren Commission proceeded in total secrecy. There was no need for secrecy, no justification for it, yet the banned media accepted that. Without this secrecy, it has long been clear, that Report could not have survived issuance.

It then was two more months before the Commission disclosed its appendix - of an estimated 10,000,000 words in 26 large volumes.

How many would even consider undertaking to read and understand 10,000,000 words - most of which had little or nothing to do with the crime itself?

There is no indication at all that any in the media undertook that and no reason to believe that any ever considered this with any seriousness.

From the effective date of the Freedom of Information Act, July 4, 1967, until the 1974 amending of that Act to open CIA, <sup>B/</sup>FBI and similar records to FOIA access, the government stonewalled those information requests it did not just entirely ignore.

The legislative history reflects that official corruption in one of the earlier FOIA suits I filed was a cause for Congress's amending of the investigatory files exemption to include CIA, FBI and similar records within compelled disclosure where not within any specific exemption.

Even then the agencies remained contemptuous of the law of the land to the point where the Senate FOIA subcommittee listed not fewer than 25 of my FOIA requests of the FBI at the time of the Act's amending it had continued to ignore at the time of those 1977 hearings.

However, the certainty that I and, in all probability, others would sue for the compelled disclosure of the FBI JFK assassination records impelled it to make what it claimed was voluntary disclosure of what it pretended was all the relevant records.

Their great volume, of about 90,000 pages divided into two releases, was in itself a mass the media could not and did not even try to comprehend and report to the nation.

And as I soon proved in two of my dozen FOIA lawsuits, the claim to total disclosure was also knowingly false. (In all, I got about a third of a million pages. Of them, about a quarter of a million are on the JFK assassination and its investigations.)

As had the Warren Commission and in late 1977 and early 1978 the FBI, the present disclosures simply drown all who have serious interests in them in a vast ocean of records, records that could and should have been disclosed to the nation at the time of the crime and its investigation,

at the time FOIA was enacted, and in response to many requests, of which mine certainly included what is now being disclosed.

The net result is the government continues to suppress, to obscure what fact may be in this enormity so much of which is junk and without any real relevance to the crime. I say this from those hundreds of thousands of pages I have and have read and because what has been reported of the current disclosures is of the same character.

This is the way government should behave when a President is assassinated and the government supposedly investigates that most subversive of crimes?

And the media should accept that?